

Pascagoula Public Library
Local History & Genealogy Department
Gravier Family

Page 28

Seventeenth Century Review, 1989

A "NOBLE" HERITAGE

On September 4, 1988, an "ARCHIVAL" HISTORICAL MONUMENT was dedicated in an almost forgotten and unmarked early Catholic Cemetery at Noble Lake, Hwy 65, ten miles south of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. The dedicated monument carries the name "NOBLE-GRAVIER FAMILY - ST. PAUL'S CATHOLIC CEMETERY". (Noble-Gravier family refers to John Noble and wife Frances Gravier).

Mrs. Fred E. Harris, President of Mary Place Chapter, presided. The order of the program: "INVOCATION" was given by Mrs. E. Granville Ryman; "GREETINGS" and a history of the "ERA AND AREA" given by Mrs. Harris; "IN MEMORIAM" by Mrs. Emma Harris Hughes (descendant); Mrs. Harland G. McKelvy, Arkansas State President, expressed her thanks to descendants for accepting CD XVII C participation saying it is fortunate that Mary Place Chapter and the Noble-Gravier descendants had the insight to contribute to Arkansas heritage; Mrs. Harris' husband, Fred, (descendant) expressed, for the descendants, their appreciation to Colonial Dames for making the event possible; also, he gave his appreciation to all those who supported him with their work and support in cleaning and restoring cemetery grounds; Dr. John L. Ferguson, Arkansas State Historian, the guest speaker, spoke "OF BEGINNINGS AND BURIALS"; "BLESSING THE PEOPLE BURIED HERE" was given by Father Frederick B. Zarrilli, Pastor, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Pine Bluff, Arkansas; BENEDICTION by Rev. George Raley (descendant).

A separate leaflet was inserted inside the folded program, furnishing information that was engraved on frontside and backside of monument. The program was video taped.

The old cemetery had grown up in tall trees, huge vines, much undergrowth, and littered with debris from years gone by. When the descendants decided to clean the cemetery, Mary Place Chapter recognized the early historical value of the project. While Mr. Harris spearheaded the cemetery cleaning, Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Rodney Kilduff, V.P. of Mary Place Chapter, and Chapter Chairman of Marking and Restoring Historical Sites, spearheaded the monument efforts and received approval from National CD XVII C for the descendants to join in on the monumental task. A large, grey Georgia granite stone was placed in the cemetery, giving as much history as possible on the size

monument selected.

The monument has been referred to as an "Archival" Monument. It is one of trifold significance. It records the history of a founding family of Arkansas, and a history of this early Arkansas Territory.

WORDING ON FRONTSIDE OF MONUMENT:

"St. Paul's, one of the earliest Catholic Churches in Jefferson County, once stood in front of this previously unmarked cemetery which occupies 6/10 acre. Hwy 65 runs between the cemetery and the site of the church building.

"The earliest burials in this cemetery were probably in the period 1830-1840. The church was built about 1851 before two acres were deeded in 1852 by Emma Kelly (Emily Callius), and was still in existence as late as 1878.

"Some tombstones that once stood here have disappeared, and some graves were likely never marked.

"Arkansas was ruled by France, Spain and again France prior to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. In 1819 it became the Territory of Arkansas, and achieved statehood in 1836.

"People of early Richland Township were mostly French, German, Spanish and Indian. Then came settlers of Scottish-Irish, English, and Italian extraction. The resulting mixture of languages meant that many names had various spellings and pronunciations.

"Noble Lake and Noble Community were named for the Noble family -

"By: Mary Place Chapter, Arkansas Society, CD XVII Century; Noble-Gravier Descendants, and Friends - September 4, 1988"

The backside gives, in chronological order, a brief history of John Noble and the Gravier family. A few excerpts are: "John Noble was born 3 June 1798 in Province of Cumberland, TN., son of Mark Noble (Revolutionary War Patriot) and Catherine Elliott (Hellett); 11 May 1799, he was baptized at Arkansas Post by Father Pedro Janin, a Spanish Priest. 20 Nov. 1819, the first edition of Arkansas Gazette at Arkansas Post mentions his mother and half-sister. Family tradition is that John Noble helped build first Catholic House of

Volume 31, No. 1

Page 29

Worship in Arkansas "ST. MARY'S"; also, he helped with St. Peter's Catholic Church. In 1824, he married Frances Gravier at Arkansas Post. She was born at the Post in 1807, the daughter of Francois Ambrose Gravier (Greve/Grabert) and Suzanne Venoy/Menoy (Mary Marguerite Plenoy). The first Gravier family arrived in Biloxi, Miss., ca 1720; later to Arkansas Post by mid 1700s. Family knowledge is that John Noble and his wife Frances Gravier are buried in the cemetery."

Some people can remember headstones in the cemetery in earlier years. Some were of the old French type, i.e. tall, heavy sandstone. While cleaning the cemetery, three pieces of sandstone parts were found ... a little wording on one, but no names.

In this area of Arkansas, the soil is very loose and loamy. Dr. Ferguson observed the "shifting" type of soil in the cemetery and suggested that by probing three feet or more, it might be possible to locate headstones that may have fallen and been buried deep beneath the present top soil.

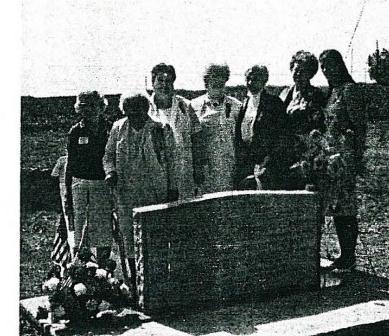
Due to trees and undergrowth on banks, the lake cannot be seen from the cemetery even though it is less than one city block away. The "horse-shoe" shaped lake is thought to be an old riverbed formed when Arkansas River changed its course at some previous time, possibly during the "New Madrid" earthquake of 1812.

Preceding the monument dedication, the ninth Noble-Gravier reunion was held with a luncheon at Holiday Inn, Pine Bluff, with 60 in attendance, which included descendants, Colonial Dames, SARs, DARs, and friends. About 100 attended the cemetery dedication. Among the descendants at dedication were eight great grandchildren: several great great's; several great, great, great's; and four great, great, great, great grandchildren. Descendants are now scattered throughout most of our states.

The best compliment of all was given by Jefferson County Judge, Jack Jones. He said: "Not only has this given the descendants a deeper feeling for their ancestors, it has also done great things for the Noble Lake Community."

Mrs. Fred E. Harris, President
Mary Place Chapter, CD XVII Century
(Arkansas Society)

**PASCAGOULA LIBRARY
GENEALOGY COLLECTION
DO NOT CIRCULATE**



Left to right: Mrs. Dale C. Loyd, State 1st. V.P. and State Chairman Genealogical Records; Mrs. E. Granville Ryman, Mary Place Chapter Organizing President, Past State President, and Mary Place Chapter Chaplain; Mrs. John Smith, State Chairman Veterans Service; Mrs. Fred E. Harris, President Mary Place Chapter and State Insignia Chairman; Mrs. Wm. W. Doak, John Eliot Chapter Chairman of Scholarships; Mrs. Harland G. McKelvy, State President; Mrs. Rodney Kilduff, V.P. of Mary Place Chapter and Chapter Chairman Marking and Preservation of Historic Sites. Attending but not pictured: Mrs. John C. Webkes, John Eliot Chapter Chairman of Pocahontas Projects.

A VISIT TO MICHIGAN

Mrs. John P. Harkins, President General, made her official visit to Michigan at the Fall Board of Management Meeting in Ann Arbor on Wednesday, September 14 at the beautiful Barton Hills Country Club. Presiding at the meeting was Mrs. William Bienien of Ann Arbor, Michigan State President of this society.

Mrs. Harkins spent a day in Michigan before the meeting telling the story of our society.

On the day of our meeting, a special social hour in honor of our President General was given in order to speak in a more personal way to our lovely leader.

After our luncheon the meeting began with all State Chairmen reports plus the business on hand and then a very informative talk by Mrs. Harkins.

Patricia Donaldson
Michigan Public Relations Chairman